

Wetlands

Wetlands act like buffer zones because they are like a hybrid of a “fully” aquatic biome (like “streams and rivers”) and a terrestrial biome (like the “savanna”). Essentially, they are areas of land defined by soil covered with water (but little enough that aquatic plants can survive), which can be either fresh, salt, or a mix. Depending on the pH level of the environment, they may refer to marshes, bogs, or swamps.



Figure 1: Picture of wetlands (taken from <http://www.branford-ct.gov/images/Wetland-view.jpg>)

Wetlands can be found anywhere in the world, save for places which stay frozen most of the year. The climate in this biome varies wildly, depending on the location of the wetland.

Chemically speaking, wetlands can also be characterized by saturation of dissolved nutrients and chemical pollutants, due to high decomposition. Water here is usually anaerobic.

Wetlands are home to the most diverse organisms on Earth. In terms of plants, wetlands support rare photosynthetic organisms such as mangrove, floating pond lilies, emergent cattails, sedges, tamarck, and black spruce. Due to the wide variety of invertebrates, many typical organisms that can be found in this biome include crustaceans, aquatic insects, muskrats, waterbirds (such as geese), beavers, and alligators.



Figure 2: Mangrove (taken from <http://seakayaking-thailand.com/images/mangrove.jpg>)



Figure 3: Beaver (taken from <http://accad.osu.edu/wo>)



Figure 4: Lily from Florida Everglades (taken from <http://lifeinbonitasprings.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Evergl>)

Because of the delicacy of the intricate relationships in the biome, humans can very easily damage wetlands through pollution, exploiting the natural resources found in wetlands, or simply draining it for agricultural purposes.